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## Earth Charter and the Canticle of the Creatures: Seeds for Planetary Communion



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I thought I would have time to write a few lines in these days. But I ended up spending my hours with a family from the Lenca people, who, when planting seeds, connect with the land—both their own and others’—nourish ancestral hopes, and embrace uncertainties that are not optional. Undoubtedly, this is the humus that nourishes my words, the force that moves our wounded world, and perhaps the reason that an anniversary inspires a renewed commitment to the cries of the Earth and its peoples.

And speaking of anniversaries, which go beyond mere counting of years, the Earth Charter and the Canticle of the Creatures by Saint Francis of Assisi come to mind. The first turns 25 years old. The second, 800. But perhaps we are facing principle-seeds that escape the prison of records. They are free from time. They belong to ancient and new wisdoms, always present in the heart of the world and in its noblest aspirations.

Let us consider the set of seeds gathered in the Earth Charter [Earth Charter Commission, 2000]. They were born from attentive and open listening, dialogue with peoples and cultures, analyzing global contexts and dynamics. They also brought together hands, ideas, and hearts from many people and regions. They felt the heartbeat of the Earth—weak and threatened. And filled with a hope that is not naïve, they gave voice to words.

I don’t believe the gathering process was easy. Nor do I think of it as a nostalgic and distant past. We are witnessing ongoing, germinal, and ever-living dynamics. Today, they are read through the voices of the

peoples, the challenges that continue to shape history, and the urgent need to move forward in equity, socio-environmental justice, and communion with all creation. The seed is called to stop being just a seed

Several centuries earlier, Saint Francis of Assisi, the universal brother who transcends religions and times, gave us the Canticle of the Creatures. The seeds of this poem sing to the Most High for the gift of all creatures: Brother Sun, Sister Moon, and the stars. They sing for Brother Wind and all weather, through which the good God gives sustenance to His creatures; for Sister Water, humble and beautiful; for Brother Fire, who with his joy and strength lights up the night and the darkness; for our Sister Mother Earth, who governs and sustains life with her diversity of fruits, flowers, and herbs. Her seeds also sing for people: those who forgive out of love, the sick, and the afflicted of the world. At the



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end of the poem, his praise even celebrates Sister Death, because mystery and pain, when embraced with passion, open the way to transformation [St. Francis of Assisi, 1225].

In 1225, the year the Cantic of the Creatures was composed, Saint Francis of Assisi was ill and marked by crisis. The world that saw him born was also going through darkness. And from that darkness, he discovered beauty, reasons for praise, and for building a cosmic fraternity-sorority in which oppressive power gives way to creaturely communion that makes us family. We are siblings of the sun and stars!

From the perspective of “brother” and “sister,” there are no masters or overlords who enslave the weak. There is no room for violence that kills, nor competition that divides. Nor for accumulation that steals, separates people, and destroys planetary balances. The darkness and crisis—of yesterday and today—do not have the final word: it is time to nurture the sprouts of a reconciled world, to care for life under threat, and to make visible that we are interconnected by sacred bonds. It is time for the warmth of home!

The Earth Charter [Earth Charter Commission, 2000], in its own language, affirms this in its preamble:

“The spirit of human solidarity and kinship with all life is strengthened when we live with reverence for the mystery of being, gratitude for the gift of life, and humility regarding the human place in nature.” [p. 5]

To remember our place in the world is to affirm our responsibility: to light the night of our history with brother fire, capable of kindling dormant hopes and global commitments for a world at peace.

For Francis of Assisi [1225], the Earth is mother while still being sister. She is a friend of diversity, and we are not her masters: she is the one who governs us and gives us sustenance. There is no room for exploitative domination or destructive superiority. It is time for collaboration among peoples, respect for natural cycles, and loving embrace of the one who nourishes and governs us. It is time to recover wonder at the world’s beauty, the simplicity of life, and the deep spirituality that unites us in the challenge of communion and care for all creatures. [par. 8]

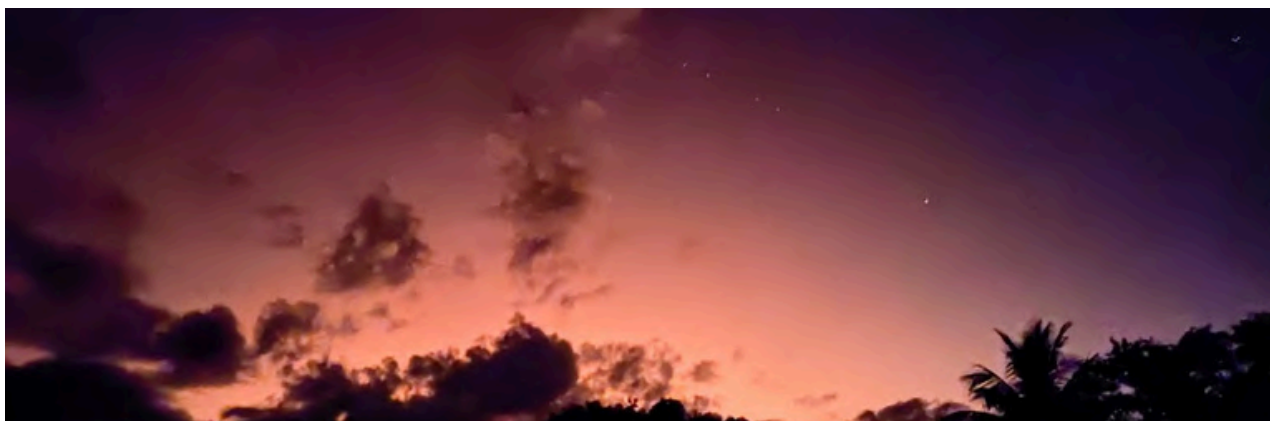


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The Earth Charter [Earth Charter Commission, 2000] reminds us of some conditions for the path of return and for future efforts, always leaving space for peoples to embrace these principles through their own ways and values:

“This requires a change of mind and heart. It requires a new sense of global interdependence and universal responsibility. We must develop and apply the vision of sustainable living at the local, national, regional, and global levels. Our cultural diversity is a precious heritage, and different cultures will find their own distinctive ways to realize the vision.” [p. 24]

Today, we continue to welcome the seed-principles of new horizons. We are Earth in celebration, one and many. Through varied languages, we are bound together by planetary challenges. The Earth Charter and the Canticle of the Creatures are part of the cosmic dance of care and compassion that makes us siblings. With our strong voices, through joint actions and conscious participation, we continue to rewrite yesterday’s commitment, carrying in our hearts the generations of tomorrow. We are living lyrics of this great planetary hymn!

Alongside the Lenca people, and with all cultures, organizations, and nations, we continue planting efforts for a reconciled world—making hope a force for change and renewing the promise to be humus, nourished by Brother Sun, the gentle breeze, and the beauty of the waters. The sprouts are already here: 800 years ago, 25 years ago, and today.



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